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One Community with One Voice – Addressing the Needs of Our Growing Urban Community

The Town of White City wishes to address the letter by Don Gourlay in the July edition of the community newsletter regarding the proposal to merge White City and Emerald Park into one urban community through a municipal annexation process.

Firstly, Don expresses a personal opinion that should annexation take place, property taxes and water rates will increase for Emerald Park residents. As clearly demonstrated in the review of property tax rates for residential and business properties in White City and Emerald Park, property taxes are quite comparable and in fact, most of the properties would see no change or would realize a reduction in property taxes. Commercial properties would see a significant reduction. Please visit one-community.ca to view the tax comparison for yourself.

In addition, should this community become one urban municipality, Emerald Park residents will be assured that their property taxes will be going to provide services in our immediate local area, rather than in other areas of a rural municipality.

As for water rates, our proposal suggests that the new urban municipality could simply continue to utilize the existing water utilities, with residents and businesses receiving water from the RM of Edenwold's (RM) system continuing to purchase their water from the RM, and current White City properties continuing to purchase water from White City.

We also see no reason why properties with private wells should be required to make any change, now and into the future. If sometime in the future, the community would need to make other arrangements for water provision to residents, that would be for the council of the day to decide, with the full consultation of the residents of the community considered.

Don also raises the issue of compensation that may be received by the RM in exchange for the annexation of developed properties.

Compensation is negotiated between the rural and urban municipality involved and is determined based on the amount of tax revenues received by the RM from the property in question, less the expenses incurred for servicing those properties and monies held in reserve for future capital infrastructure improvements in an area to be annexed.

This is a common, regular practice during any annexation process in the province and there are many cases, including recent examples in the



case of Swift Current, Yorkton, Martensville and Warman, where there is a precedent for compensation paid.

The analysis is now underway to determine what a reasonable compensation amount would be for the RM and this information will be part of the negotiation process going forward.

Don's concern that Emerald Park residents would have no representation on any future council of the new community is simply unfounded. Upon becoming one community, it will be imperative that a new council be elected by all residents of the larger urban municipality so that all residents are equally represented. This could occur at the same time as the next civic elections across the province, or upon completion of the annexation and transition process by order of the Minister of Government Relations.

At that time, any resident of the new community would be able to seek a seat with the new council and the democratic process would take its course.

Greater democratic representation for the residents and businesses of Emerald Park and the other sub-divisions included in the proposal is one reason many people support this initiative. Instead of having one councillor representing over 35% of the RM's population in an urban area served by a rural municipal council, there would be a larger council made up of people focussed solely on urban issues and building a strong, vibrant urban community.

Don states that the Town has not made any effort to negotiate with the RM which is simply false. The Town held the first of what will be several public Open Houses in early June and representatives of the RM did attend. It was publicly advertised, and many people took the opportunity to attend, ask questions and learn more.

In addition, the Town officially sent a meeting request to the RM on June 12, 2018, and it is anticipated we will hold the first of several meetings to negotiate the annexation agreement in coming weeks.

Lastly, Don suggests White City should join the RM. Emerald Park cannot become an urban municipality on its own as it is an unincorporated community situated beside an incorporated urban municipality. By way of the boundary alteration provisions within *The Municipalities Act*, the provincial policy directive is that where there are two communities existing beside one another, they should join to form one municipality. We agree with this provincial directive and believe the time is now to have this discussion. This is one of the reasons why White City is putting forward this proposal and a vision for one urban community.



Our broader community, as everyone knows, has experienced tremendous population growth and development in the last decade and is projected to continue to grow at a pace that will see our population reach over 22,000 within 25 years. That is not that far away! This growth will continue, whether we are one community or not.

The One Community-One Voice proposal is about a vision for the future of this community and meeting the challenges of growth.

It's about all residents of our community uniting and working together with one municipal government to build the community we want – one that provides greater access to recreational facilities, offers high-school and other educational opportunities right here in our community, delivers efficient high-quality and responsive municipal services, is a business-friendly environment and plans future development and land-use that supports the needs of a vibrant community.

It's about creating a municipal government that listens to and represents the interests of its residents. It makes sense for us to join and become one urban municipality that focuses specifically on the needs of our community.

Annexation of the areas proposed is the process required under provincial legislation to allow this to happen.

The Town of White City welcomes your questions, feedback and interest in our proposal. We know there is tremendous support for this initiative as many people believe it's time to take this step and come together officially as one community and we also know there are people with questions and concerns.

We encourage you to visit the website at one-community.ca for more information and if you would like to speak to one of our staff or council members, please don't hesitate to call the Town office.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Town of White City Council